

**STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JAMES L. OBERSTAR  
H.J. RES. 102, JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS  
DECEMBER 8, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, when Congress passed SAFETEA-LU – the legislation that reauthorizes the federal surface transportation programs – in 2005, it recognized the need to significantly increase federal investment for highway, highway safety, and transit programs. In fact, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) increased the overall investment in surface transportation programs by more than 40 percent, with a significant part of that increase guaranteed to take effect in fiscal year 2007.

Earlier this year, the House passed H.R. 5576, the Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development (TTHUD) appropriations bill, which meets SAFETEA-LU's funding guarantees. It provides an increase of \$3.4 billion for the Federal-aid highway programs and an additional \$474 million for the transit programs over the fiscal year 2006 SAFETEA-LU funding levels.

It is now more than two months since the start of fiscal year 2007, and the Republican-led Congress has not enacted the TTHUD appropriations bill. Instead, H.J. Res. 102 provides funding for the highway, highway safety, and transit programs through February 15, 2007. The Resolution funds these programs at the fiscal year

2006 level. Thus, all of the highway and transit investment increases guaranteed by SAFETEA-LU are put on hold. If this approach is continued and the Continuing Resolution is extended through FY2007, SAFETEA-LU's guaranteed highway funding will be cut by \$3.4 billion and its transit investment slashed by \$474 million.

Under a long-term Continuing Resolution, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) safety programs will be funded at substantially lower levels than guaranteed in SAFETEA-LU. NHTSA stands to lose up to \$21.7 million. At a time when more than 43,000 people are dying in roadway crashes each year, we simply cannot afford to shortchange an agency tasked with making our roadways safer. Likewise, FMCSA could lose almost \$27 million that would be spent on motor carrier safety programs and grants. It is essential that we properly fund these critical programs.

The highway, highway safety, and transit programs differ from most other federal programs in that they are supported by user fees. Motorists who drive on our highways pay the fees when they pump gas. They willingly pay the fees because they rely on a commitment by the Federal government to use the money so collected to finance our highway and transit programs. In other words, users have already paid for the investments authorized in SAFETEA-LU and funded in the House-passed TTHUD appropriations bill. However, the Republican-led Congress' failure to enact

this legislation in a timely manner will shortchange funding for critical transportation projects.

Transportation projects are usually high-cost undertakings that take several years to complete. Certainty in funding – especially federal funding – is critical to their success. Relying on short-term, stopgap measures, such as Continuing Resolutions, does not provide the certainty that state departments of transportation need to plan for their construction projects in the upcoming season. And for northern-tier states, where construction seasons are short, delays in providing adequate federal funding can severely disrupt their process for contract bidding, directly affecting next year's construction season.

Continuing Resolutions also provide great uncertainty for transit programs. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has delayed the release of transit formula apportionments and other new grants until a final TTHUD appropriations act is enacted. The Continuing Resolution, coupled with FTA's policy, is resulting in many transit agencies being unable to advance badly needed transit projects.

According to the Federal Reserve, housing construction is currently very weak throughout the country. Congress should do everything within its power to ensure that transportation infrastructure investment is not disrupted through congressional

inaction, placing an additional burden on this sector of the economy. Hundreds of our small businesses and thousands of our workers could be put at risk as a result. I urge Congress to fulfill its responsibilities in passing appropriations acts and to honor the funding guarantees established in SAFETEA-LU.